INFORMATION NOTE:

# UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (UNDOF)

**Location**
Syrian Golan Heights

**Headquarters**
Damascus

**Duration**
June 1974 - to date

**Authorized strength**
1,450

**Current strength**
1,344 and 7 observers detailed fromUNTSO (30 June 1991)

**Fatalities**
26 (30 June 1991)

**Force Commander**
Major-General Roman Misztal (Poland)

## Historical Background

On 6 October 1973, war erupted again in the Middle East between Egyptian and Israeli forces in the Suez Canal area and the Sinai and between Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights. On 24 October, as fighting between Egypt and Israel reached a critical stage, the Security Council decided to set up a second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II). The Force was immediately moved into place between the Israeli and Egyptian armies in the Suez Canal area, and its arrival effectively stabilized the situation.

While relative tranquillity was restored on the Egyptian front, in the Israel-Syria sector tension remained high, and by May 1974 the situation became increasingly unstable. Against this background, the United States undertook a diplomatic initiative, which resulted in the conclusion of an Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces. The Agreement provided for an area of separation and for two equal zones of limited forces and armaments on both sides of the area, and called for the establishment of a United Nations observer force to supervise its implementation. The Agreement was signed on 31 May 1974.

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## Establishment of UNDOF

Later on the same day, the Security Council adopted resolution 350 (1974) by which it decided to set up UNDOF immediately, under its authority, and requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps. UNDOF's mandate was to supervise the cease-fire lines between Israel and Syria, and the redeployment of Syrian and Israeli forces; and to establish a buffer zone, as provided in the Agreement on Disengagement. Since then, the Security Council has periodically extended UNDOF's mandate for periods of six months at a time. The current mandate expires on 30 November 1991.

## UNDOF's Activities

Advanced parties of the Force arrived in the area on 3 June 1974 and within two weeks its total strength was brought to near its then authorized level of about 1,250. Following the completion of the disengagement operation and the delineation of the lines bounding the area of separation, UNDOF set up a series of check-points and observation posts within that area. In addition, two base camps were established, one on the east side of separation and the other on the west side.

Today, UNDOF personnel remain deployed within and close to the area of separation, with base camps and logistics located nearby. The main function of the Force continues to be the supervision of the cease-fire between Israel and Syria and of the area of separation to ensure that there are no military forces within it. This is carried out by means of static positions and observation posts, which are manned 24 hours a day, and by foot and mobile patrols operating along predetermined routes by day and night. Temporary outposts and additional patrols are set up from time to time to perform specific tasks. Since November 1977,

when two members of UNDOF were wounded by fire from the Israeli side, there have been no major incidents in the area.

UNDOF headquarters maintains close liaison with both sides through their senior military representatives. At the local level, the commanders of the UNDOF units maintain liaison with one side or the other through liaison officers designated by the parties.

UNDOF also conducts fortnightly inspections of armament and force levels in the area of limitation. These inspections are carried out with the assistance of liaison officers from the parties, who accompany the inspection teams. The findings of the inspection teams are communicated to the two parties. The inspections have generally proceeded smoothly with the cooperation of the parties concerned, although on both sides restrictions are regularly placed on the movement of the teams in some localities.

### Humanitarian Functions

In addition to its normal peace-keeping functions, UNDOF has carried out activities of a humanitarian nature. At the request of the parties, UNDOF has from time to time exercised its good offices in arranging for the transfer of released prisoners and the bodies of war dead between Israel and Syria. It has assisted the International Committee of the Red Cross by providing it with facilities for the hand-over of prisoners and bodies, for the exchange of parcels and mail and for the passage of persons and personal effects across the area of separation.

### Composition of UNDOF

UNDOF was originally composed of the Austrian and Peruvian contingents and the Canadian and Polish logistic elements transferred from UNEF II. The Peruvian contingent was withdrawn in July 1975 and replaced by an Iranian contingent. This contingent was in turn withdrawn in March 1979 and replaced by a Finnish contingent. Currently, UNDOF is composed of contingents from Austria, Canada, Finland and Poland. A group of military observers, detailed from UNTSO, is included in the Force and is under the operational control of the Force Commander. In addition, UNTSO observers assigned to the Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission may assist UNDOF as occasion requires.

### Financial Aspects

From its inception UNDOF has been financed from the amounts appropriated for UNEF II, for which the establishment of a special account had been authorized by the General Assembly. Following the termination of UNEF II in July 1979, the account remained open for UNDOF. As at 31 August 1991, contributions outstanding to the account for the period from the inception of the operation to 30 November 1991 amounted to $23.8 million. The costs of UNDOF for the current mandate period, through 30 November 1991, are estimated at $3.4 million gross per month.

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